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Identical letters dated 19 June 2012 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I wish to draw your attention to the following.

At an extraordinary session held in Doha on 2 June 2012, the League of Arab States at the ministerial level adopted a flawed resolution requesting the administrators of the Arab satellite communications organization Arabsat and the Egyptian satellite company Nilesat to take the necessary action to stop broadcasting Syrian governmental and non-governmental satellite channels. That unprecedented political resolution blatantly contradicts the principle of freedom of information, as well as the Arab Satellite Broadcasting Charter adopted by the Arab minsters of information in 2008, article 5, paragraph 4 of which provides for

> "compliance with the principle of freedom to receive and retransmit broadcasts. Throughout the territory of States members, Arab citizens shall have the right to receive any television transmission originating in the territory of any State member of the League of Arab States".

The contemptible resolution of the League also violates article 4 of the Arab Satellite Broadcasting Charter, which states that entities and service providers that transmit or retransmit satellite broadcasts shall comply with the following general principles:

1. Openness and transparency of information, and protection of the right of the public to receive accurate information;
2. Protection of free competition in broadcast services;
3. Protection of the rights and interests of broadcast service receivers;
4. Provision of comprehensive services to the public.

Moreover, the resolution is a blatant violation of the principles of the media profession. It is acutely at odds with the freedom of access to information, as defined at the World Summit on the Information Society held in Geneva in 2003; the approach of the General Assembly Committee on Information; the free flow of information, knowledge and ideas in the information society; and the right to comprehensive and non-discriminatory access to information and communication technology in all countries. Furthermore, the Arab States that pressed for the resolution to be adopted censor their own media in every way, excluding alternative views from the media discourse. The resolution effectively contradicts the proposal of the United Nations Special Envoy to Syria, Kofi Annan, a proposal that was endorsed by Security Council resolution 2042 (2012). The fifth point of the proposal calls on the Syrian Government to allow the media to enter Syria. Since 25 March 2012, over 207 media teams from around the world have entered Syria, in addition to correspondents from over 100 media organizations that are permanently accredited in Damascus. How can it be right for the Annan proposal to require that the Syrian Government allow foreign media freely to enter its territory, while the Council of the League of Arab States requests Arab media organizations to stop broadcasting Syrian governmental and non-governmental satellite channels?

The resolution of the League of Arab States amounts to media piracy. It reveals the hidden schemes of its sponsors, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Those States have adopted a plan to target Syria and its people by funding and arming terrorists, while also attempting to conceal what is really happening in the country by suppressing the Syrian national media in favour of the spurious fabrications about Syria and its Government that are concocted and disseminated by their own channels, which openly incite violence, killing, massacres and the continuation of bloodshed in Syria.

We remain committed to the proposal of the Special Envoy as regards the free entrance of the media to Syria. We stress that the relevant international agencies must take the appropriate positions regarding the resolution of the League of Arab States, which should be withdrawn. It is a flagrant violation of the most fundamental principles of freedom of information and the human right to access information. It seeks to silence the Syrian national media; but the latter belongs to the Syrian people, so any move against it is a move against them. More dangerously still, such shameful yet momentous resolutions can set a precedent for the work of the international media in other parts of the world, endangering the free flow of information and jeopardizing the achievements of the international community in that area.

I should be grateful if this letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 55, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic
to the United Nations